

DECEMBER 17, 1981

Typewriters must not mean much to their owners. Wherever I happen to be, there always seems to be a vacant machine available. Right now, for example, I've taken over an empty conference room at a motel 100 or so miles east of Dallas. I was waiting to do a speaking job for a cow sale on a ranch close to Mt. Pleasant. Afternoon TV shows weren't holding my attention, so I wandered off down here to make my report.

The herdmaster of the outfit holding the sale has already taken me on a tour of the outfit. The layout is a modern operation based on registered Red Brahman cattle. They speak of embryology as casually as we do of natural calving. I had a hard time making my way through such labels as "donors" and "recipients" in various herds of cattle.

One handicap I'm carrying is that the herdmaster and his wife are familiar with the Shortgrass Country. Away from home, it's difficult to deal in the truth. Normally, I can paint a pretty good picture of my homeland, but today, I've had to use the truth as a tool and that's always a hard case to handle.

For example, in the embryo lab the only story I had even vaguely related to this process was about an old housecat we used to have when I lived back up on a divide 20 miles from nowhere. The closest tomcat was at least nine miles away, yet she raised litters of kittens faster than jackrabbits multiply.

Though all my hosts would do was smile, I am nearly sure that old housecat must have been a pioneer in some kind of transplanting. She never left the barn much farther than the horse trap. I remember that a trapper used to come by about once a month with a pickup full of pot licker hounds, but other than that pack of dogs upsetting her routine, she was never far from sight.

As bad as that story failed, I'm sure not going to add it to my act tonight. If you can't handle a tale, even a good one like that, on a one to one basis, you sure better not try it on a big crowd of high stepping cattle buyers. I never have had much luck telling the truth. People nowadays just don't put much value on an honest man.

These cattle they are breeding are the big humpy kind that have a roll in their ear tip. A doctor and his sons are the owners and the actual operators. I haven't been given a chance to interview the doctor. Don't misunderstand It hasn't been because he's a big shot Dallas healer; it's because he's been busy helping organize the sale.

What little I have seen of the owner, it's obvious that he likes the cow business. The herdmaster said he spends three days practicing medicine and the other four days working his ranch. It 's plenty obvious that the doctor is involved in the operation. He wears an old floppy hat that has a brim roll exactly like his red cattle's ears. I don't know enough about the doctor business to tell a smock from a scalpel, but it doesn't take many cow years to spot an hombre that's hooked on our game. I heard that they were going to auction off that hat tonight to help the Boy's Ranch out at San Angelo. If that be so, it's sure going to prove that these hombres are soft hearted about charity.

I'm awful uncomfortable knowing that part of the audience knows that we don't have any labs on the ranches back home. I'm working on an idea about an old hen that was raised on Spring Creek what laid double yolk eggs. It'd be just my luck to be hired by

an outfit that's heading toward being a regular second Star Trek. I wish now I'd worn my work hat to be in style.